INDIANA MINE RESCUE ASSOCIATION

16th Annual Mine Rescue, Benchman and Preshift Contest
Monroe City, Indiana
June 3, 2004

FEATURE STORY INSIDE:
Spring Hill Mine Disaster
April 30, 1947

REFERENCE
DO NOT CIRCULATE

History and Origin of Mine Rescue

Throughout history, stories of mine disasters like the Spring Hill Mine disaster and others like it have made mine rescue synonymous with courage and with heroism of near legendary proportions.

Mine rescue stories illustrate the determination and tenacity that are the hallmarks of mine rescue. They are stories of disasters, of hope, and of rescue in the face of overwhelming odds, and finally there are stories of a select few who risk their own lives to save the lives of others. And this is what mine rescue is all about!

In this country, the first recorded mine disaster took place near Richmond, Virginia in 1839. Since that time, records show that thousands of miners in this country have lost their lives in fires, roof falls, explosions, and inundations. In one form or another, mine rescue has been around as long as underground mining. But, it wasn't always the well-organized team effort that we know today.

In its earliest days, mine rescue was a haphazard effort at best. Rescue parties were little more than groups of miners and other volunteers who happened to be at the mine at the time of the disaster. As heroic and well intentioned as their efforts may have been, these people were ill equipped for the work at hand. They had no mine rescue training, no equipment and no reliable breathing gear. The odds were against them. All too often, their names were added to the already large list of those who died in the disasters.

In the United States, the turn of the century was a particularly hazardous time to be a miner, as by the number of those who died in disasters at that time.

The Monongah disaster of 1907, for example, claimed 362 lives. Two-hundred fifty-nine (259) died in the Cherry disaster of 1909. In 1907, 239 miners lost their lives in the Darr disaster. The Marianna disaster of 1908 claimed 154 lives.

Continued Inside

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Besides being a time marked by great disasters, the early 1900's also ushered in some important events which marked the origins of mine rescue as we know it today.

In 1907, a self-contained breathing apparatus (a Draeger) was first introduced in this country. The introduction of self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBAs) meant that, for the first time, those entering mines filled with irrespirable air could carry their own breathing air along with them. Of course, the amount of time the rescuers could stay underground was naturally limited by the amount of oxygen their gear provided, but it was a start.

The new SCBAs were first used to fight a mine fire in Butte, Montana in 1907, and they went on to figure in the success of many future mine rescue efforts. Even though rescuers now had reliable breathing protection, their efforts were still hampered by lack of organization, training, and equipment.

In 1908, an early apparatus crew of five men entered a mine after a disaster in Star Junction, Pennsylvania. At first glance, this attempt to be a forerunner of today's team rescues, but the effort was not a highly organized one, and the crew was not trained specifically for mine rescue work. At this point, the idea of using an organized specially trained and equipped group or team of individuals was an idea still in its formative stages.

In 1910, however, the U.S. Bureau of Mines was formed and with it came the organization, training and team element that mine rescue so badly needed.

The Bureau established a network of specially outfitted railroad cars and placed them at strategic locations throughout the mining area of the United States. Each car served as a base of operations for a group of individuals trained and equipped specifically for mine rescue work.

Because their breathing gear's full head covering resembled a deep sea diver's helmet, the groups became known as helmet crews. The crews were trained to respond quickly and professionally to disasters in their own districts, much as modern teams do.

The new helmet crews were called on to lend a hand at several major disasters and they were responsible for saving the lives of scores of trapped miners. Although the crew's access to breathing gear and other equipment was a great help to them, their success could be attributed to more than that. For the first time, the rescuers had the training and organization they needed to turn an uncoordinated, often even chaotic, rescue attempt into a well coordinated, efficient group effort. The birth of the early crews clearly marked the beginning of modern mine rescue teams.

As we have seen, the history of underground mining is filled with such accounts of disaster. Through the years, disaster has claimed thousands of lives in the United States alone. And this is not the end of the story. Disasters still can occur. But there is one bright spot in this otherwise bleak picture of death and destruction. The loss of life and property would have been much greater if it weren't for the work of mine rescue, from early chaotic rescue efforts to today's highly professional and organized team rescues.

Today, miners travel underground secure in the knowledge that disaster should strike, mine rescue teams will make every possible attempt to rescue them and will keep trying until they'd searched every corner of the mine and they know the rescuers won't give up until they have exhausted all hope of ever finding them alive.

This is the mine rescue tradition.

16th Annual
Indiana Mine Rescue, Bench And Preshift Contest

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Wednesday - June 2, 2004
Team/Judges Registration and Golf Outing

9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Team/Judges Registration	MSHA Office 2300 Willow Street Vincennes, IN
10:00 am	Golf Outing	Fox Ridge Country Club Shotgun start
3:00 pm (Time approx. after golf)		Wheelbarrow Raffle Drawing and Barbecue Buffet

Thursday - June 3, 2004
Mine Rescue, Bench & Preshift Contest, South Knox High School

7:00 am	Team Lock-up, South Knox High School Gym Late Team Registrations
7:05 am	Written Examinations
8:00 am	Competition

Lunch will be provided for all participants courtesy of **Solar Sources Underground, LLC**

The awards ceremony will commence immediately following the field competitions.

INDIANA MINE RESCUE ASSOCIATION

Vincennes, Indiana
June 3, 2004

PRESIDENT/MASTER OF CEREMONIES
Tommy Sutton

EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT
Jeff Wirth

SECRETARY
Pam Harrington

TREASURER
Bruce Waldman

ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE CHARIMAN
Jeff Wirth

AWARDS COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
Greg Xanders

FINANCE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
Bruce Waldman

SPONSORSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
Gary Timmons

NOMINATING COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
John Stachura, Jr.

CONTEST COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN
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PRE-SHIFT CHAIRMAN
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INDIANA MINE RESCUE ASSOCIATION
2004 MINE RESCUE, BENCHMAN AND PRESHIFT CONTEST
Judges/Officials

Mine Safety and Health Administration

Cheryl Adams – IN
Beth Anderson – IN
Ed Banovic – IL
Charles Carpenter – AL
Dean Cripps – IL
Bob Cross – IL
Butch Dorton – AL
Jerry Fitzpatrick – IL
Fred Fugate – KY
Gary Gibson – KY
Bruce Harris – IN
Ron Hayes – KY
Carol Helderman – IN
Jim Henshaw – IN
Gary Jones – IN
O.L. Jones – AL
Steve Kattenbraker – IL
Terry Langley – AL
Scott Lee – IL
Phil Long – IL
Mary Nowikowski – IN
Mark Odum – IN
Leland Payne – EFS
Dan Ramsey – IN
Mike Rennie – IL
Ed Ritchie – IN
Keith Roberts – IN
Bryan Sargeant – IN
Ron Stahlhut – IN
Pat Stanfield – KY
Duffy Stradtner – IN
Albert Strate – IN
Sara Stumbo – IN
Vernon Stumbo – IN
Dave Whitcomb – IN
Jeff Williams – IN
Art Wooten – IL
Harold Yates - KY
Ron Zara - IN

Illinois Department of Mines and Minerals

Dolly Monte Gary Roberts Jerry Odle John Smith

Indiana Bureau of Mines and Mine Safety

Joe Batson

Kentucky Department of Mines and Minerals

Danny Knott

Indiana Vocational Technical Institute

Charles Jones

Special Volunteer

Joe Gladson

Special thanks to South Knox School for their time, effort, and extra support

BENCHMAN'S CONTEST
PARTICIPANTS
June 3, 2004

ILLINOIS

The American Coal Company, Galatia Mine.....Joe Myers

KENTUCKY

Webster County Coal, LLC, Dotiki.....Jack Edens

Ohio County Coal Company.....Dwight Baker

PRESHIFT CONTEST
PARTICIPANTS
June 3, 2004

INDIANA

(2) Steve Kedwell.....Black Beauty Coal Company

(3) Joby Johnson.....Solar Sources, Inc.

(1) Dennis Wallace.....Gibson County Coal LLC

(5) Chad Held.....Triad Mining, Inc.

(4) Chad Booher.....Triad Mining, Inc.

PARTICIPATING MINE RESCUE TEAMS
June 3, 2004

ILLINOIS

Willow Lake, Arclar Co. LLC.....Equality, Illinois

Andy Murphy – Captain	Joe Drone
Shawn Miller	Lester Bryant
Bob Wiman	Kevin Rice
Brian Britton	Bill Chubb
Tom Patterson - Trainer	

Galatia Mine, The American Coal Co.....Harrisburg, Illinois

Tim Kirkpatrick – Captain	Mike Harris
Danny Sizemore	Dave Minor
Joe Myers	Mike Smith
Lenny Hanner	Mike Welch

Turris Coal Company, Turris.....Williamsville, Illinois

John Butcher – Captain	Joe Bull
Paul Perrine	Brett Bushong
Alan Setzer	Kevin Smith
Brandon Sanson	Guy Hunt
Pete Bryant - Trainer	

Team Pattiki, White County Coal, LLC.....Carmi, Illinois

Mike Emery – Captain	Brock Patterson
Lonnie Garrett	Gary Thweatt
Jason Belford	Todd Blair
Brad Deen	Shawn Batty
Tommy Joe Steele – Trainer	

INDIANA

Black Team, Indiana Bureau of Mines.....Vincennes, Indiana

Jim Newton – Captain	Julie Bedwell
Eric Head	Terry Thombleson
Mark Kitchen	Chris Cross
Shane Meadows	Danny Lovell

Mike Stanley/Greg Xanders – Trainers

Red Team, Indiana Bureau of Mines.....Vincennes, Indiana

Terry Phegley – Captain	Chris Sargeant
Tony Wilson	Rich Wilkes
Mike Workman	Bruce Thompson
Rod Dilbeck	Jason York

Mike Stanley/Greg Xanders – Trainers

Kentucky

Highland 9, Highland Mining Company.....Morganfield, Kentucky

Randy Duncan – Captain	James Miller
Brian Phillips	Jody Greenwell
David Dennis	Jack Willingham
Delbert Richie	Dennis Snyder

Jim Allen – Trainer

Ohio County Coal Company.....Henderson, Kentucky

David Bryant – Captain	Jerold Adams
John Tow	Joel Brantley
David Dukes	John Saddler
Bill Bullock	Dwight Baker

Allen Gibson - Trainer

Dotiki, Webster County Coal, LLC.....Nebo, Kentucky

Steve Morgan – Captain	Garry Mitchell
Steve Utley	Jan Chambliss
Tony Moore	Gary Utley
Marc Turner	Jack Edens

Mark Evans - Trainer

MINE RESCUE TROPHY SPONSORS

First Place

Shouse Sawmill, Inc.

Second Place

United Central Industrial Supply

Third Place

CSE Corporation

BENCHMAN'S TROPHY SPONSORS

First Place

Five Star Mining, Inc.

Second Place

Black Beauty Coal Company

Third Place

Triad Mining, Inc.

PRESHIFT TROPHY SPONSORS

First Place

Holmes Safety Association

Second Place

Indiana Mine Rescue Association

Third Place

Indiana Mine Rescue Association

INDIANA MINE RESCUE AND BENCHMAN CONTEST RESULTS 1989 - 2003

	CONTEST	BENCHMAN
1989	White County Coal Corp. Pattiki Mine	Monterey Coal Co/No. 2 Silver Team - Terry Renken
1990	Kerr-McGee Coal Corp. Galatia Mine	Amax Coal Co/Wabash Mine Gray Team - Les Richards
1991	Peabody Coal Company Eagle #2 Team	Peabody Coal Co/Camp Complex David Gatten
1992	Kerr-McGee Coal Corp. Galatia Mine	Peabody Coal Co/Camp Complex David Gatten
1993	Monterey Coal Company Pathfinders Team	Monterey Coal Co/Pathfinders Ken Price
1994	Peabody Coal Company Camp Complex Team	Kerr-McGee Coal Corporation Galatia Mine - Joe Myers
1995	Kerr-McGee Coal Corp. Galatia Mine	Costain Coal Co./Costain Team Todd Watson
1996	White County Coal Corp. Pattiki Mine	Peabody Coal Co/Marissa Mine Wayne Shook
1997	White County Coal Corp. Pattiki Mine	White County Coal Corp/Pattiki James Fishback
1998	Peabody Coal Company Camp Complex Team	Lodestar Energy, Inc. West Ky. Team - Todd Watson
1999	The American Coal Company Galatia Mine	Lodestar Energy, Inc. West Ky Team - Todd Watson
2000	Peabody Coal Company Camp Complex Team	Lodestar Energy, Inc. Baker Team - Todd Watson
2001	Indiana Bureau of Mines Indiana State Team	White County Coal LLC James Fishback
2002	Webster County Coal, LLC Dotiki Mine	Lodestar Energy, Inc. Baker Team - Todd Watson
2003	Webster County Coal, LLC Dotiki Mine	Turris Coal Company Turris Team – Guy Hunt

RECORDED

INDIANA COAL MINE DISASTERS

DATE	MINE NAME	LOCATION	LIVES LOST	TYPE
11-21-1878	Sullivan	Sullivan, Indiana	8	Explosion
12-26-1896	Oswald	Princeton, Indiana	7	Explosion
03-22-1905	Oswald	Princeton, Indiana	9	Explosion
01-14-1907	Deering No. 7	Clinton, Indiana	7	Explosion
03-20-1909	Sunnyside	Evansville, Indiana	6	Explosion
12-03-1919	No. 3	Jacksonville, Indiana	6	Explosion
05-03-1920	Submarine	Clinton, Indiana	5	Explosion
02-20-1925	City	Sullivan, Indiana	52	Explosion
12-09-1926	Francisco No. 2	Francisco, Indiana	37	Explosion
01-28-1931	Little Betty	Dugger, Indiana	28	Explosion
07-15-1937	Baker	Sullivan, Indiana	20	Explosion
05-22-1941	Panhandle No. 2	Bicknell, Indiana	14	Explosion
04-30-1947	Spring Hill	Terre Haute, Indiana	8	Explosion
07-27-1948	King	Princeton, Indiana	13	Explosion
03-02-1961	Viking Mine	Terre Haute, Indiana	22	Explosion

THE TERRE HAUTE TRIBUNE

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FIRE HALTS MINE BLAST PROBE

4 KILLED, 43 HURT IN PENNSY WRECK

"American," Crack Flyer, Sideswipes Sidetracked Freight Train Near Huntingdon, Pa.

HUNTINGDON, Pa., May 1.— (UP) — Inch-thick steel plates slipped over the side of a freight car and sliced open two passenger coaches of a Pennsylvania Railroad express train near here today.

Four persons were killed and the railroad reported the slicing steel injured at least 43 others.

The American, bound from New York to St. Louis, was hauling the freight when the steel slid from its moorings. It scraped the passenger locomotive, gouged into a mail car, an express car and a combination baggage and passenger coach.

Then it ripped the steel sides from two passenger coaches. The "Deluxe" coaches were ripped into shambles before the emergency brakes brought the train to a grinding halt.

Freight Piles Into Wreckage.

In the early morning darkness, another freight piled into the wreckage and its locomotive and tender were overturned.

J. C. Blair Memorial Hospital here was jammed with injured. A hastily-organized relief train was sent from Altoona, 75 miles away, and took back more than 30 injured and three of the dead.

Nurses at Altoona Hospital said many of those injured were in serious condition. "They seem to be suffering heavy shock," an attendant said.

The American left New York at 8:50 p. m. last night. It was speeding through the Juanita River Gap in the eastern foothills of the Alleghany mountains.

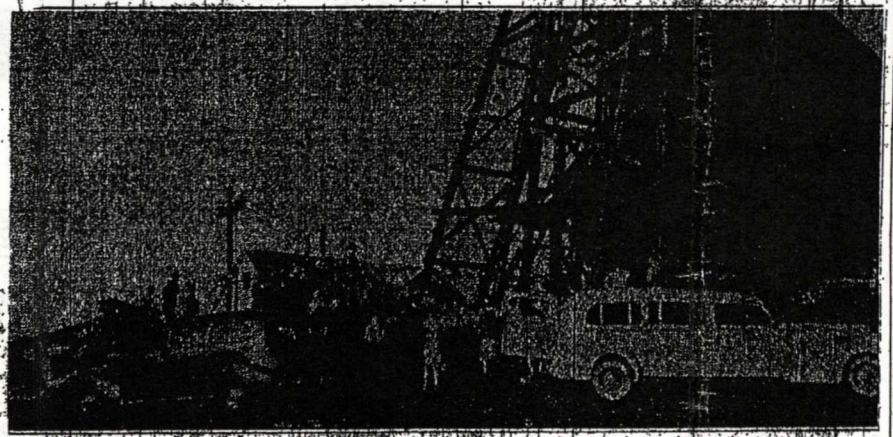
As the passenger train overtook and passed the slow-moving freight on an adjacent track, the "lading" of steel slipped.

A ball of fire, like hot coals tossed to float by our car, "Red" Fogall, of Garvilla, Ark., a passenger in a following coach said, described the crash of steel and train. "It seemed like a meteor."

Doyle Strawn, a sailor from Hooks, Tex., said he was asleep in his seat when he felt a heavy jolt. "Fortunately I was hunched down."

People screamed. It seemed just like a long metal arm reached into

Families of Miners Gathered Around the Tipple of Spring Hill Mine



SCENE AT THE SPRING HILL MINE WHERE EIGHT MINERS LOST THEIR LIVES WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON.

TWO BIG UNIONS DISCUSS MERGER

AFL and CIO Leaders Meet—Spurred By Labor Bill In Congress.

By Harold W. Ward.

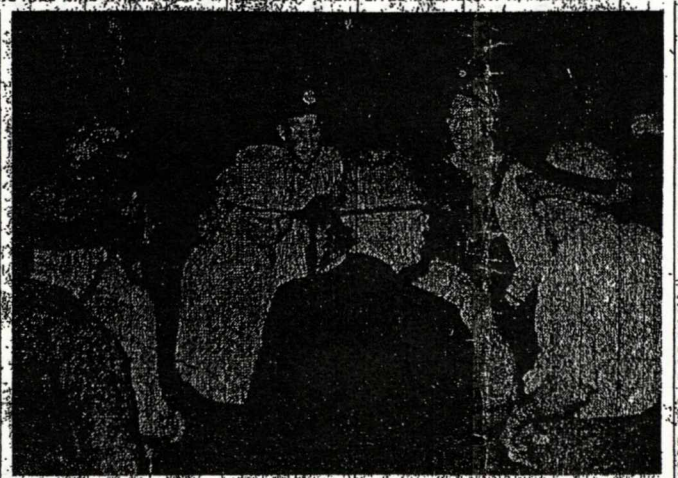
WASHINGTON, May 1.—(AP)—The AFL and CIO shake hands today and begin talking about merger.

Labor bills in Congress hastened the meeting.

Both rival leaders—William Green of the AFL and Philip Murray of the CIO—asserted in advance of their 11 a. m. (C.D.T.) huddle that they have an "open mind" about how to solve the major obstacles to unity.

But little optimism could be found in either camp over the prospect of an early consolidation of the AFL's 7,500,000 and CIO's 6,000,000 members.

Murray thinks the two groups



Investigation of the Mine Disaster By Mine Owners and Mine Inspectors. Harry Kerns, owner of the mine at the right.

EIGHT MINERS LOSE LIVES IN SPRING HILL MINE EXPLOSION

Three Miners Escape With Lives As Death-Dealing Explosion Roars Through Workings of Spring Hill Mine, Southeast of City—Victims Died of Poisonous Gases.

HINTS SAFETY VIOLATIONS

A fire in the gas-filled Spring Hill Mine, southeast of the city, where eight trapped miners died Wednesday afternoon as the result of an explosion, prevented federal and Indiana state inspectors from determining the cause of the blast today.

However, an inspector for the Regional Bureau of Mines said this afternoon preliminary examinations indicated that blasting operations deep in the mine workings touched off a deadly dust explosion.

The dead are:

CALVIN WILSON, mine boss, of West Terre Haute.
BARNEY RIGGS of 1707 Lafayette avenue.
JOHN BROWN of 1016 Tippecanoe street.
DESIRE FRANCIS LEITE, SR., of R. R. 4, Terre Haute.
STEVE SUMMERS of West Terre Haute.
FERN EARHART of West Terre Haute.
MORT GATES of West Terre Haute.
CHAUNCEY BLACKBURN of Liggett.

J. S. Maleaky, an inspector with headquarters at Vincennes, Ind., said there were no definite conclusions yet about the cause. He said official investigation in the deep recesses of the mine would begin tomorrow. The men died 2,000 feet from the shaft opening.

State Mine Inspector Griff Morris was asked this afternoon to investigate reports that blasts were set off in the mine while miners were in the tunnels, in violation of state mining laws. Maleaky said this was also a violation of the federal safety code.

The death-dealing blast occurred when a dynamite charge set off a major explosion which rocked through the mine, filling it with deadly carbon monoxide gas, smoke and dust.

Three other members of the crew, working on a ventilating system 60 feet beneath the surface, had left their companions at the far end of the corridor and were near the shaft.

"We heard the noise, and it wasn't very loud," Adam Harmon, one of the survivors said. "The smoke came rolling down the tunnel and we ran for the elevator."

(Rumpe Hamper Rescue.)

MEMORIAL HALT AT SOME MINES

Two Shafts Shut Down Today For Period of Mourning For Spring Hill.

A state-wide "memorial holiday" among Indiana miners loomed today as a result of the explosion at the Spring Hill Mine Wednesday which claimed the lives of eight miners. The movement appeared similar to the memorial period which followed the recent Centralia, Ill., mine disaster which snuffed out the lives of 111 miners.

Two large mines near Terre Haute, the Saxton and Dresser were idle today, the over 600 miners in the shafts having declared a "memorial holiday" in sympathy with the families of the men killed in the Spring Hill explosion.

Some miners employed at the Black Hawk mine were reported to have remained away from work today.

Mine officials stated they believe all mines in this area and perhaps in the entire state may be closed in the sympathy movement.

Approximate daily output of mines already idled by the memorial holiday is 6,500 tons.

District 11 officials of the United Mine Workers of America are in Washington for the John L. Lewis conference with mine operators. It was reported in Terre Haute that they did not learn of the explosion at Spring Hill mine until they were telephoned this morning by District 11 headquarters.

No statement was issued by the union headquarters regarding the beginning of the memorial weekend.

District union officials who are attending the Washington conference are Louis Austin, president; Curt Nicholson, vice president, and Ralph Day, secretary-treasurer.

Worst Indiana Mine Disaster Since 1941

State mine officials said today that more than 1,000 Indiana miners have been killed in mine accidents in the last 50 years.

The Indiana Bureau of Mines and Mining reported that yesterday's Spring Hill coal mine explosion was the state's worst mine disaster since 1941. On May 33 of that year, 51 miners were killed in an explosion at the Panhandle coal mine near Pitt-

EIGHT MINERS LOSE LIVES IN SPRING HILL MINE EXPLOSION

*Three Miners Escape With Lives As Death-Dealing Explosion Roars Through Workings of Spring Hill Mine, Southeast of City – Victims Died of Poisonous Gases.....*The Terre Haute Tribune, May 1, 1947

A fire in the gas-filled Spring Hill Mine, southeast of the city, where eight trapped miners died Wednesday after noon as the result of an explosion prevented federal and Indiana state inspectors from determining the cause of the blast today.

However, an inspector for the Regional Bureau of Mines said this afternoon preliminary examinations indicated that blasting operations deep in the mine workings touched off a deadly dust explosion.

The dead are:

Calvin Wilson, mine boss, 66
Barney Riggs, 69
John Brown, 58
Desire Francis Lete, Sr., 60
Steve Summers, 57
Fern Earhart, 53
Mort Gates, 50
Chauncey Blackburn, 50

J.S. Malesky, an inspector with headquarters at Vincennes, Ind., said there were no definite conclusions yet about the cause. He said official investigation in the deep recesses of the mine would begin tomorrow. The men died 2,000 feet from the shaft opening.

State Mine Inspector Griff Morris was asked this afternoon to investigate reports that blasts were set off in the mine while miners were in the tunnels, in violation of state mining laws. Malesky said this was also a violation of the federal safety code.

The death-dealing blast occurred when a dynamite charge set off a major explosion which rocketed through the mine, filling it with deadly carbon monoxide gas, smoke and dust.

Three other members of the crew, working on a ventilation system 60 feet beneath the surface, had left their companions at the far end of the corridor and were near the cage shaft.

"We heard the noise and it wasn't very loud," Adam Harmon, one of the survivors said. "The smoke came rolling down the tunnel and we ran for the elevator."

Fumes Hamper Rescue

Harmon, Frank Pangrazio and Everett Marshall found the cage in working condition, rode to the surface and summoned help. Dense smoke pouring from the mine tipple held rescuers on the surface for more than three hours before they could enter the shaft and begin their search for victims or survivors.

Physicians said the bodies were not burned or mutilated, indicating that all eight men had died of poisonous gasses or suffocation. Rescuers said that the ventilating system had failed and that there was no air in the section where the bodies were found.

The 11 miners had entered the diggings earlier in the day to repair and improve the ventilating system. The mine had been closed since the general safety shutdown of April 1.

It failed to pass the first federal inspection and under an agreement between the U.S. Bureau of Mines and Owner Harry Kerns the men

were permitted to enter the tunnel and correct conditions.

The rescue crews, some members of which took part in the dramatic efforts to save the 111 miners killed at Centralia, Ill., March 26, said the initial dynamite charge was set off to loosen rock and coal for the ventilating system pipes.

Multiple Explosion

It apparently ignited coal dust in the mine corridor and the multiple explosions killed the eight-man crew working at the head of the diggings.

Relatives and friends of the miners pushed against police lines throughout the rescue period hoping that some word would come from below reporting the men safe or only injured.

However, rescuers returned to the surface, stepping from the lift into the bright glare of a power driven emergency electric system and told of finding all eight men dead.

The mine formally employed 60 men and produced about 400 tons of coal daily.

First Body Removed

The first body hoisted from the mine was that of Barney Riggs, 67 years old. It was brought up at 10:15 o'clock and 15 minutes later, that of Desire Francis Lete, Sr., 60, was brought to the surface.

Two more bodies were removed from the mine at 1 o'clock this morning. They were those of Chauncey Black burn, approximately 50, and Fern Earhart, approximately 50, both jerry men. Earhart's head was badly crushed.

Ross Wilson, son of the mine boss who was at the mine at the time of the explosion, was one of the men working with the Indiana Mine Rescue Squad from West Terre Haute. One of the members of the rescue squad, Lucien Busiere, was partially overcome by carbon monoxide gas and had to be treated with the fire department resuscitator.

Traffic around the mine was in charge by 11 State Police officers under the direction of Lt. Eugene St. John. Capt. A.H. Irving of the city police directed their activities in caring for the crowd.

Cars in the vicinity were estimated at between 1500 and 2000. They lined all roads around the mine and leading to it for more than a mile in each direction. More than 3,000 persons were in the crowd which waited the verdict of the eight men.

Undergoing Repairs

The mine, a small truck mine operated by the Spring Hill Coal Company, owned by Harry Kerns, was not operating for production. Lt. Comdr. CE. Poe of the local Coal Mines Administration Office said today. "Through a special agreement between the federal mine inspection and District No. 11 office of the United Mine Workers of America, the owner was permitted to work a limited number of men in driving a new air shaft and doing general clean-up work in the mine preparatory to a federal mine inspection to allow resumption of operations for production," he said. The work necessitated taking some coal from the mine on alternate days, he explained, in order to keep it clear.

Griff Morris, director of the Indiana Bureau of Mines and Minerals, was on hand within a few minutes after the blast and was directing the rescue work of the Indiana Mine Rescue Station at West Terre Haute. He was assisted by William Gibbons,

assistant mine inspector, and Evan Evans, superintendent of the West Terre Haute rescue station.

Oxygen apparatus was lowered to the tunnel last night so that rescue workers could go beyond the brattices and speed up reaching the doomed men. Smoke and dust continued to come from the shaft hours after the explosion occurred.

Others Aid Rescue Work

Within a few minutes after the detonation occurred, State Police and sheriff's deputies were on hand. A cordon of State police was set up to block the road to the mine to prevent accidents and leave room for rescue workers.

The Terre Haute fire department resuscitator was dispatched to the scene and on hand for rescue work as soon as the men were brought to the surface. City police aided in holding the crowd back. Ambulances from all funeral homes in the city were called to the scene and kept alternate watch after it was found that the men could not be rescued at once.

The Red Cross was notified and furnished coffee and sandwiches for the workers under the direction of Mrs. Mary Pierson, executive secretary.

MINE BLAST PROBE DELAYED BY FIRE

*Spring Hill Mine Sealed To Extinguish Blaze – Investigation To Be Held Later....*The Terre Haute Tribune, May 2, 1947

The explosion-shattered Spring Hill coal mine was ordered sealed today by Owner Harry Kerns to extinguish a fire in the pit which began raging soon after Wednesday afternoon's blast.

It was reported that because of the fire a probe of the explosion which claimed the lives of eight miners can not be launched until at least 30 days and maybe not for two months.

Task of sealing the mine began this morning under the supervision of Roy Capps, of the U.S. Bureau of Mines safety division, stationed at Vincennes. Sealing will be accomplished by top men employed at the mine. Capps declared he would work under the direction of Griff Morris, director of the Indiana Bureau of Mines and Mining.

Since an investigation as to the cause of the explosion has been made temporarily impossible, officials are not certain what set off the blast. Some claim, however, that it was a dust explosion.

Morris was reported today to have said that his department would not shoulder any responsibility for the disaster. The local office of the United Mine Workers took the same stand as Morris.

CHARGE VIOLATION IN MINE EXPLOSION

Board Claims Presence of Men In Shaft During Shot-Firing Against Law
Terre Haute Tribune, May 3,1947

The explosion which killed eight men at the Spring Hill mine near here Wednesday afternoon was caused by blasting in violation of company policy and federal law, it was determined Friday evening at a preliminary investigation by federal, state and UMWA officials.

Indiana Mines Administrator Lt. Comdr. C.E. Poe said that the investigating board showed that the disaster was a direct result of blasting violation. Poe pointed out

that Harry Kerns, owner of the mine, had given orders that black powder shots were "not to be fired" while the miners were in the shaft.

The investigation was held at the Indiana Mine Rescue Station in West Terre Haute. A more complete probe will be made as soon as the fire now burning in the mine is extinguished. The mine was ordered sealed today by Mr. Kerns, and probably will not be entered by investigators for at least 30 days.

Men Killed By Blast

Coroner James V. Richart Saturday morning stated that the eight members of an 11-man repair team trapped in the mine were killed by force of the concussion. "The primary cause of death in each case was blast. None of them died by carbon monoxide gas because they were killed before they had a chance to draw a breath."

Of the three men who escaped uninjured, one of them, Adams Harmon, attended the hearing. Clearence Gosnell, one of the Spring Hill miners who was not working the day of the explosion, also was at the hearing.

Evidence given by Harmon showed that the firing of shots while men were in the mine was contrary to orders of the owners. According to both state and federal mining safety codes, all men, with the exception of the shot firer, are to be out of a mine when charges are set off.

It was also pointed out in the hearing that black powder was used in the shots. Although black powder is no violation, it is considered more dangerous than permissible explosives.

Against Use of Black Powder

Griff Morris, director of the Indiana Bureau of Mines and Mining urged at the meeting the adoption of state legislation to outlaw the use of black powder in Hoosier mines.

"Black powder has not been generally used in coal mining for many years to blast coal," he said. "Many men have been killed as a result of explosions caused by this explosive." He said that there is a definite need for some state legislation to prohibit its use in coal mines.

8 MEN KILLED IN TERRE HAUTE MINE EXPLOSION

Dynamite Blast Fatal in Spring Hill Mine; Bodies All Recovered.....Vincennes Sun-Commercial, May 1, 1947

Eight of 11 men working in the Spring Hill coal mine near here were killed by an explosion yesterday.

Dr. C.L. Puckett, mine physician, said none of the bodies showed any signs of burns but that Earhart's head was crushed.

Rescue squads said the bodies, found about 15 feet apart, indicated the men were walking toward the shaft when the explosion occurred.

Work of bringing the bodies out of the mine had been delayed, rescuers said, by a smoke pocket which spread over the blast area. They said it was necessary to carry each body through circuitous, low, narrow passages more than a half mile to the mine shaft.

Three men who escaped unhurt from the shaft said they were knocked to the mine floor by a dynamite blast which the miners, 1,000 feet back in the tunnel were

setting off just 12 minutes before quitting time yesterday.

Wesley Harris, a veteran mine superintendent and mining instructor at Indiana State Teachers College here, said there apparently was no fire, and mining authorities surmised that the dynamite blast had touched off a dust explosion.

Crowds awaited the appearance of bodies at the tipple in the warm, moonlit night. The soft crying of women broke the quiet as each body was brought to the surface.

Rescue Worker Overcome

A rescue worker, Lucian Bussarre of Terre Haute, was brought to the surface himself, overcome by fumes in the dust-clouded mine. He was revived by artificial respiration.

The three who escaped promptly went back underground to try to rescue their eight co-workers.

Noel Lenne, top man, said he saw clouds of dust roll out of the mine as he waited for the men to come up in the cage from the 85-foot shaft.

Lt. Cmdr. C.E. Poe, federal administrator of mines for Indiana, said the mine has not been operating for production since the closing order issued by the government following the March 25 disaster in a Centralia, Ill. Mine.

Annual Report of Bureau of Mines and Mining of the State of Indiana July 1, 1946 – June 30, 1947

Indiana Mining laws violated are as follows:
Not having a shot firer to fire the shots when the men were out of the mine.
Drilling ahead of loose end or chance.
Insufficient rock dusting.
(Prior to the time the mine was shut down by the Federal Bureau of Mines, a shot firer was used.)
Recommendations: That in no case that men do their own shooting. Also that black powder and shooting coal off solid be outlawed as soon as possible.

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